

James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, September 16, 1821, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

Oak Hill, Loudon County, Virginia, September 16, 1821.

Dear Sir, I have just receiv'd your letter of augt. 4th, with your official letter of July 30, and P. S. of Augt. 14th to Mr. Adams, 1 with another letter to him announcing the arrival of Col: Butler at Pensacola. Your correspondence with the Govr. of W. Florida, ordinances, for the organization, of the internal government, and other documents mentioned in your official letter, have been forwarded to Mr. Adams at Boston, from whom I expect soon to hear on the subject.

1 *Am. State Papers, Misc.* , II. 896.

It is impossible, at this moment, for me to enter fully, into the subject of your communications, or even to answer your private letter to me, in that detail, that I could wish. Since the adjournment of Congress many interesting concerns, of a public nature, have pressed on me, and in addition, the indisposition of a part of my family, has been such, as to keep me in this quarter. I am just setting out for albemarle, at which place, or immediately after my return here, which will be in a fortnight, you shall hear from me again.

I was fully aware of the nature and extent of the duties you had to perform, in taking possession of the Floridas, serious, under any circumstances, but made peculiarly painful and burdensome, by the dilatory and prevaricating conduct of the Spanish authorities there, as well as at Cuba, and particularly of the governor of W. Florida, with whom you had to treat. I was fearful, that your detention, so long, in the interior, at a season which was unhealthy, and daily becoming more so, would subject you and your lady, and staff,

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to serious indisposition, and in fact all the troops, who were to occupy the posts to be surrender'd. I find by your letters that you have suffered, but it is very gratifying to know, that it has not disqualified you, from the performance of any portion of your duty, and that being at Pensacola, which is so much celebrated for its salubrity, there is good cause to hope that you and family, should they have sufferd, will soon be in perfect health.

I had great difficulties to encounter, in carrying into effect the Spanish treaty, in the arrangements depending on me, for taking possession of the Floridas, the appointment of the officers under you, 2 the organization of the board of Commissioners etc. the labour was the greater, because I had at the same time, interesting questions to decide on, with France and England, and likewise the painful duty imposed by the late law, for the reduction of the army. I have no doubt that errors, and serious errors have been committed, but I have a perfect consciousness of having done in every instance, all that I could, for the good of my country, and those concern'd. It is very gratifying to me to have receiv'd your very frank and friendly letter, and be assur'd, that it shall not be without its proper effect. Mistakes, may be mitigated, if not entirely healed. Of Mr. Fromentins 3 standing, as a Senator, I was well acquainted. I had heard of the charge against him, respecting the female, mentioned in yours, but seeing him afterwards with his Lady, and he being supported by the senators from Louisiana, and many, from other States, I had presumed that he had cleared the matter up to their satisfaction. of the other details I had never heard before. His friends pressed him, for the office of Commiss'r, under the treaty, and the question seemed to turn between him and one of those appointed. I had no hesitation in the case. If two courts are established, one at Pensacola, and the other at St. Augustine, other judges, will probably be appointed at each. In that case Judge Hayward may be provided for. of his talents and excellent character in other respects, your letter gave me full assurance, but having

2 List in *Am. State Papers, For. Rel.* , IV. 753.

3 See vol. III., pp. 49, 114, 125, 127.

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on its receipt, decided to appoint judge White 4 one of the Commissioners, it was thought that it might be said, that too many distinguished officers, were taken from Tennessee.

4 Joseph M. White, appointed one of the commissioners "for ascertaining claims and titles to land within the Territory of Florida"; delegate in Congress from the territory 1825–1837.

The delay of the officers, in arriving at their posts, proceeded in part, from our knowledge of the delay at Cuba. I know well that it imposed on you heavier duties, and the country, after the provinces were surrendered, to greater expences. But in truth the whole business was difficult, and from the prevarication at Cuba, it seems doubtful, whether we should not be compelled, either, to take the posts again by force, or submit to further injustice and indignity.

With respect to the army, my effort, was, to preserve all, that I could, without injury to the feelings of any. Genl. Atkinson, 5 was respected by you all; he was reduced in rank; and No. Carolina had no one in military or civil stations, of high rank, a circumstance which had weight. Your observations however have force and will not be forgotten. It will be my object to protect the honor, of high minded men, and heal wounds which have been unintentionally given.

5 Brig.-Gen. Henry Atkinson (1782–1842), an important figure in western exploration and fighting.

Your proceedings in Florida appear to me to have been judicious, in pressing with decision the surrender or transfer of the provinces, in noticing the improper conduct of the governor, and in your sketch of [the] ordinances, which you passed, for the organization of the internal govt. The appointment of Judge Breckenridge 6 was proper, and I had presumed, and wished, in filling the offices which might be necessary for the internal administration, that you might have provided for, and placed near you, some of those, whom I should have been happy to have provided for, myself. In these respects, something may be done

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in future, both by you and me, and I shall certainly have it in view, as far as it may be practicable, regarding existing engagements.

6 As alcalde of Pensacola; vol. III., p. 51.

On one point more, I shall now make a few observations, which is to urge my wish, that you do not retire from office. Florida is an important position, and its government, under a wise and vigorous administration, of high importance to the U States. You may for years, render most essential service there. Your continuance in service too will be felt usefully abroad. Things are not settled any where; and the names of those most devoted to our republican system, who are known to have efficiency and energy of character, will give it great support every where.

Mrs. Monroe was happy to find that Mrs. Jackson enjoyed her health, under all the fatigues and exposures she had to encounter, with you, and desires her best regards to be presented to her, with mine. Mr. and Mrs. Hay, are at this time absent. Mrs. Gouverneur, who lately lost her infant, is with us, as is her husband. 7 They both desire to be remembered to you and to Mrs. Jackson.

7 George Hay of Richmond and Samuel L. Gouverneur of New York had married Monroe's daughters.

with great respect and sincere regard I am sincerely yours